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RETAIL PRICES - MARCH QUARTER, 1958.

Index numbers of retail prices for the March quarter of 1958 (with the weighted average of the six capital cities in 1923-1927 as base of 1,000) were as shown below.

"C" Series Retail Price Index Numbers and Percentage Increases, March Quarter, 1958.

City.	Aggregate All Groups.			All Groups, excluding Price Move- ments in Potatoes and Onions.		
	Index Number.	Increase from-		Index Number.	Increase from-	
		March Qtr., 1957.	Dec. Qtr., 1957.		March Qtr., 1957.	Dec. Qtr., 1957.
		%	%		%	%
Brisbane ..	2411	3.9	1.7	2432	4.4	1.2
Toowoomba	2430	3.1	1.7	2450	3.3	1.3
Rockhampton	2420	2.5	1.3	2440	3.2	0.7
Townsville	2519	2.9	1.6	2543	3.6	1.0
Bundaberg	2402	4.3	2.0	2420	4.7	1.4
Warwick ..	2378	3.4	1.1	2396	3.7	0.8

The "C" Series index number for Brisbane in the March quarter, 1958, was 1.7 per cent. higher than in December quarter, 1957. This was the largest increase since that for September quarter, 1956, and, like the rise in the final quarter of 1957, was chiefly due to rises in prices of various items of food and groceries. Other sections of the index were very steady compared with the preceding quarter, even housing having not yet shown any effect from the recent amendments to the system of rent control.

The food and groceries section of the index number increased in the latest quarter by 3.7 per cent., but a large part of this increase was due to an upward movement of potato prices, which during recent years have been subject to wide and irregular fluctuations. Excluding the effect of potato and onion prices, the food and groceries section increased by only 2.6 per cent., which was substantially less than a corresponding increase of 3.6 per cent. in the previous quarter. The combined index, excluding potato and onion prices, increased by 1.2 per cent. in the March quarter, compared with the 1.7 per cent. rise in the complete "C" Series index.

Prices of food and groceries were up in the latest quarter in all the cities for which the index number is calculated, the increases ranging from 2.6 per cent. in Warwick to 4.0 per cent. in Bundaberg, or excluding potato and onion prices from 1.5 per cent. in Rockhampton to 2.9 per cent. in Toowoomba. Prices of clothing and footwear and of miscellaneous items and house rents rose slightly in most cities.

Changes in sections of the index are shown in the following table.

Retail Prices, Percentage Increases, March Quarter, 1958.

City.	Food and Groceries.			Clothing and Footwear.		Miscellaneous Items.	
	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From Dec. Quarter, 1957.		From Year Ended June, 1939.	From Dec. Quarter, 1957.	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From Dec. Quarter, 1957.
	A	A	B				
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Brisbane ..	225.7	3.7	2.6	297.2	0.4	140.8	0.3
Toowoomba	245.6	3.9	2.9	301.1	0.1	139.3	0.1
Rockhampton	207.4	2.8	1.5	291.5	0.0	149.2	0.8
Townsville	201.7	3.3	2.0	292.4	0.1	152.7	0.4
Bundaberg	214.6	4.0	2.8	298.0	0.2	140.5	1.0
Warwick ..	231.3	2.6	1.8	301.3	0.2	145.1	0.1

Note: A includes, and B excludes, price movements due to potatoes and onions.



Food and Groceries.

The food and grocery section (including potatoes and onions) increased substantially in all cities, the increase being greatest in Bundaberg and least in Warwick. This was due to upward price movements in several items. Potato prices, which fell to a low level in the previous quarter rose to a more normal figure. Meat and bread price rises which occurred during the previous quarter became fully effective on the index numbers during the March quarter, while there were also price rises in eggs, flour, rolled oats, onions, and household soap.

Clothing and Footwear.

During the quarter, this section of the index remained very stable in all cities, no appreciable change being recorded in Rockhampton, and ranging to a maximum increase of only 0.4 per cent. in Brisbane.

Miscellaneous.

This group also showed only a slight upward movement in all cities. There were increases in gas prices in Rockhampton and Townsville and firewood prices in Bundaberg.

Rent (4 and 5 roomed houses).

This index increased in Brisbane (0.4 per cent.), Toowoomba (0.9 per cent.) and Townsville (1.0 per cent.) and remained unchanged elsewhere. Recent legislation permitting freer adjustments of house rents had no appreciable effect on the March quarter indexes, but its influence may become apparent in future quarters as more rent adjustments are put into effect.

Comparison of Costs in Queensland Cities.

The following table shows the amounts, for the various Queensland cities, required in March quarter, 1958, to purchase the quantity of goods or housing which would have cost £1 in Brisbane.

Amounts Required in Various Cities to Purchase Equivalent of £1 in Brisbane.

City.	All Groups.			Food and Groceries.			Rent (4 and 5 Rooms).			Clothing and Footwear.			Miscellaneous Items.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Brisbane ..	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Toowoomba ..	1	0	2	1	0	2 $\frac{1}{4}$	19	4 $\frac{1}{4}$		1	0	2 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	0	6 $\frac{1}{2}$
Rockhampton	1	0	1		19	8 $\frac{3}{4}$	19	9 $\frac{1}{4}$		1	0	1	1	1	0 $\frac{1}{2}$
Townsville ..	1	0	10 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	8	1	2	5 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	0	0 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	2	0
Bundaberg ..		19	11	1	0	4 $\frac{1}{2}$		15	8 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	0	3 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	0	9 $\frac{3}{4}$
Warwick ..		19	8 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	1 $\frac{1}{4}$		14	3 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	1 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	1	5 $\frac{1}{2}$

Commonwealth and State Basic Wage Rates.

The Commonwealth industrial authority suspended automatic ("cost of living") adjustments after the adjustment which operated from the beginning of the first pay-period in August, 1953. Since that date, adjustments to the basic wages have been made from time to time, often on special applications, both by the Commonwealth and State industrial authorities. Particulars of such adjustments have been given in previous issues of this bulletin. At present, the New South Wales basic wage alone is being varied automatically with movements of the index numbers, while in Queensland and Western Australia, the State Industrial Courts have usually varied the wage after the index numbers have been published.

The Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission, following a special hearing early in 1958, again refused to restore automatic "cost of living" adjustments, but increased the male basic wage in all States by 5s. per week - to take effect for the first pay period beginning on or after 21st May, 1958. In South Australia, where the Commonwealth rate is adopted, 5s. per week was added to the State basic wage.

Following publication of the index numbers for the March quarter, 1958, the Queensland State Industrial Court raised its basic wage by 4s. for males and 3s. for females. In New South Wales an "automatic" upward adjustment - 5s. for males and 4s. for females in Sydney - came into operation, while in Western Australia no change was made in the rates for Perth. In Victoria and Tasmania there was no change.

Current basic wage rates are given in the following table.

Retail Prices and Basic Wage Rates.

Australian Capital Cities.

Capital City.	Retail Price Index.				Common-wealth Basic Wage.			State Basic Wage.						
	Dec. Quarter, 1957.		March Qtr., 1958.		Males. <sup>a</sup>			Males.		Females.		Date of Operation. <sup>b</sup>		
	A	B	A	B										
					£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	
Brisbane	2371	2402	2411	2432	12	3	0	12	8	0	8	7	6	28. 4. 58
Sydney	2613	2630	2665	2677	13	8	0	13	14	0	10	5	6	May, 1958
Melbourne	2560	2559	2564	2566	13	0	0	13	3	0	9	17	0	Aug., 1956
Adelaide	2465	2473	2466	2472	12	16	0	12	16	0	9	12	0	26. 5. 58
Perth ..	2707	2708	2712	2718	13	1	0	13	8	6	8	14	6	7. 2. 58
Hobart	2684	2707	2707	2716	13	7	0	13	12	0	10	4	0	Aug., 1956

Note: A includes, and B excludes, price movements due to potatoes and onions.

a Operative first pay-period beginning on or after 21st May, 1958. The female rates are 75 per cent. of the male rates.

b Where dates are not quoted wage rates operate from beginning of first pay-period in month shown.

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BRISBANE.

28th May, 1958.



## The "C" Series Retail Price Index.

(Base for Each Section: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-1927 = 1,000.)

City.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Year Ended Dec., 1957.	Year Ended March, 1958.	Quarter Ended -					
				March, 1957.	June, 1957.	Sept., 1957.	Dec., 1957.	March, 1958.	
1. Aggregate - All Groups.									
Brisbane .. ..	863	2343	2366	2321	2337	2343	2371	2411	
Toowoomba .. ..	851	2371	2389	2358	2373	2363	2389	2430	
Rockhampton .. ..	861	2374	2389	2360	2374	2372	2389	2420	
Townsville .. ..	912	2462	2480	2447	2469	2452	2480	2519	
Bundaberg .. ..	841	2331	2356	2304	2335	2329	2356	2402	
Weighted Average									
Five Towns .. ..	864	2355	2376	2334	2351	2353	2380	2420	
Warwick .. ..	822	2326	2345	2300	2325	2326	2351	2378	
2. All Groups EXCLUDING price movements of potatoes and onions (a).									
Brisbane .. ..	863	2361	2386	2330	2349	2362	2402	2432	
Toowoomba .. ..	851	2391	2410	2372	2386	2385	2419	2450	
Rockhampton .. ..	861	2391	2410	2364	2384	2392	2422	2440	
Townsville .. ..	912	2482	2504	2454	2473	2482	2517	2543	
Bundaberg .. ..	841	2347	2374	2311	2342	2347	2387	2420	
Weighted Average									
Five Towns .. ..	864	2373	2397	2343	2362	2373	2412	2441	
Warwick .. ..	822	2339	2361	2311	2331	2338	2377	2396	
3. Food and Groceries.									
Brisbane .. ..	856	2648	2687	2631	2641	2631	2689	2788	
Toowoomba .. ..	814	2691	2743	2705	2695	2654	2708	2813	
Rockhampton .. ..	895	2655	2681	2644	2661	2638	2675	2751	
Townsville .. ..	955	2769	2798	2764	2794	2728	2788	2881	
Bundaberg .. ..	903	2686	2734	2652	2697	2665	2731	2841	
Weighted Average									
Five Towns .. ..	864	2661	2698	2646	2658	2641	2697	2795	
Warwick .. ..	846	2700	2736	2659	2709	2698	2732	2803	
4. Food and Groceries EXCLUDING price movements of potatoes and onions (a).									
Brisbane .. ..	856	2699	2748	2655	2675	2684	2780	2851	
Toowoomba .. ..	814	2744	2776	2743	2728	2713	2791	2871	
Rockhampton .. ..	895	2697	2736	2649	2683	2691	2764	2806	
Townsville .. ..	955	2819	2860	2779	2803	2805	2887	2946	
Bundaberg .. ..	903	2727	2783	2669	2710	2711	2816	2895	
Weighted Average									
Five Towns .. ..	864	2710	2757	2669	2688	2695	2788	2856	
Warwick .. ..	846	2737	2779	2687	2725	2727	2807	2858	
5. Clothing and Footwear.									
Brisbane .. ..	829	3252	3269	3225	3245	3259	3280	3293	
Toowoomba .. ..	829	3290	3309	3252	3289	3298	3322	3325	
Rockhampton .. ..	845	3283	3299	3267	3285	3293	3308	3308	
Townsville .. ..	840	3275	3284	3262	3269	3277	3293	3296	
Bundaberg .. ..	839	3303	3325	3252	3309	3320	3332	3339	
Weighted Average									
Five Towns .. ..	831	3261	3277	3234	3254	3267	3288	3298	
Warwick .. ..	825	3261	3281	3231	3248	3258	3306	3311	

(a) Excluded as from September quarter, 1955.